

New Club Formation

Although there are many ways to initiate the formation of new clubs, the most common form is when somebody contacts Toastmasters or your district expressing an interest in forming a club. In sales, these are called “Qualified Leads”, and they are about as good as it gets.

You will never get a second chance to make a first impression

Within 24 hours of receiving an inquiry, somebody should try to make contact with the person making the inquiry. The half-life of a good lead is less than fully enriched uranium. It is very important to move quickly and with confidence, since those are the qualities our lead is most likely trying to improve. E-mail is a last resort. It is too impersonal. All initial contacts should be made by phone if at all possible.

The first step is to determine the nature of their request. (The person making the contact should be skilled at sales) The leads tend to fall into the following categories:

- 1) People interesting in finding a club to join
- 2) People interested in forming something other than a Toastmasters club
- 3) People interesting in forming a club at work or in their community

If all they want to do is to join a club, then simply help them determine which club near them is a good fit.

If they are interested in something strange that does not sound like a Toastmasters club, then don't try to fit a square peg into a round hole. Trying to create a custom Toastmasters club is more work. If the club's agenda is not consistent with the mission and values of Toastmasters, it will most likely fail quickly. In the end, nobody is happy. It is often better to direct these inquiries to other organizations that can better help fill their needs. Now we are down to the people who are indeed interested in forming a club in their community or at work.

The first step here is to try to determine their ability to form a club. It is very important in this phase to be honest and not to inject your desire to form a new club into the way you perceive their responses. They will usually tell you the truth about their situation, so we need to keep our ears open.

Typically the person making the inquiry only has a vague sense of what Toastmasters is all about. Often, they are intimidated by the prospect of starting a club on their own. So one trick I use is to tell them “*if you get 35 people in a room, I'll get you a Toastmasters club*”. This accomplishes several things at once:

- 1) It lets them know that our team will handle the tough/unknown stuff
- 2) Their primary responsibility is to get the 35 people in the room
- 3) It establishes us as the authority on club formation and them as the person handling internal logistics within the organization. “A confused customer does not buy”

Since the contact person is typically motivated and connected to the people in the community or

company, then getting 35 people in a room is not a big task for them. Don't shoot for 20 because on 18 will show up and only 12 will sign up.

Once they have made a verbal commitment, then make sure they have ordered a New Club kit from TI. This will require that some paperwork is filled out and that a Charter fee is submitted. Offer to be on the phone with them when they are filling out the forms to help walk them through them. This lets you know exactly where they are at in the process, helps to build a close relationship between you and the contact person, and reinforces your role as the expert.

At this point they may (will) ask for a cost breakdown. Be as honest and clear in this communications as possible. Typically I will explain this over the phone and then follow up with an email breaks the costs down, with explanations, and shows a Total Cost at the bottom of the sheet.

Costs to start a new Toastmasters Club:

A new Toastmasters club must have a minimum of 20 members. In addition to a \$125.00 Charter Fee, the costs of starting a new club are as follows: All new members pay a one-time new member fee of \$20.00 (Transfer, dual, or reinstated members need not pay this fee), and all members of the new club pay six months' advance dues of \$36.00. Each club may also choose to assess local chapter dues for each member to cover additional costs, i.e., ribbons, awards, refreshments, etc.

Club Charter Fee: \$125

New-Member Fee: \$20 (one time fee, pays for initial manuals)

Dues: \$36, payable every six months

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| <i>Charter Fee:</i> | <i>\$125</i> |
| <i>New Member Fees: \$20 X 20 (Members) =</i> | <i>\$400</i> |
| <i>Semi-Annual Dues: \$36 X 20 (Members) =</i> | <i>\$720</i> |

Total: \$1,245

Divided by 20 Members is: \$62.25

(this has been modified to reflect the recent dues increase)

IMPORTANT: It is very important to be honest and up front about the costs of running a club. It is better to overestimate costs than it is to come up short. It is also very important to explain in advance when the renewal will occur and how much that cost will be. Contacts that have an issue communicating costs to their coworkers will panic if they have to ask for more money a couple months after chartering.

And the final piece of the initial phone call is to schedule the demo meeting. My general rule of thumb is to try to get the demo meeting set up within two to three weeks. This will give you time to line up your demo meeting team and put on a quality meeting. If they ask for a demo meeting before two weeks (Can you be here tomorrow?), my answer would be "YES". I would be in a bit of a panic, but I'm sure I could wrangle up a team of Toastmasters in that amount of time.

If you get 30 to 35 people to the demo meeting you will typically get 22 to 24 to sign up on the spot.